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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

# INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Poland

SUBJECT Procedure for Induction into Military Service

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- Military Service Induction Procedure
1. "Young people of military age are inducted into the Polish armed forces twice a year: in May-June and (supplementary induction) in September. The young men get a summons by post telling them exactly on what day and what hour they have to appear before the appropriate commission at the Rejonowa Komenda Póborowa in the place of their permanent residence. Should they temporarily work or live at some other place, they go with this summons to the railway ticket office there and get a ticket free of charge to travel to their permanent place of residence.
  2. "The Rejonowa Komenda Póborowa do not coincide with the administrative divisions of Poland. For instance, in Poznan there are two Komenda Póborowa: one in Ulica Lechów and the other in Ulica Mierczewskiego. In the provinces it is forbidden to sell spirits on the days the levy is taking place.
  3. "When a recruit appears on the premises of the commission he hands to the N.C.O. on duty his summons and the following documents:

Odcinek Zameldowania or Dowód Osobisty  
Kartyka Urodzenia  
Atwiadczenie Lekarskie  
Atwiadczenie Pracy

The recruit may be exempted from service if he can produce a certificate of the Miejska Rada Narodowa that his father is dead and he is the only breadwinner in the family (mother and small brothers and sisters) or that he has a wife and small child to support. Recruits may also be exempted if their factory or institution has military importance and they have a certificate stating that they are absolutely required in the production process.

4. "Then the recruits take off their clothes in a large waiting room and hang them up on nails along the walls. In this room their height and weight are measured. The commission proper sits in another room. It consists of two to five officers and

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or two army doctors. Sometimes they sit at one table; sometimes the officer and doctor groups each have a table; sometimes there are several small reception groups in one large room.

5. "The recruits are called to this commission either in one or two pairs, the N.C.O. on duty calling their family names in the waiting room. The first questions are put by the doctors who ask what diseases a recruit has had. If he mentions TB, he is examined in greater detail. Questions are also asked on venereal diseases. The recruit's eyesight is checked by making him read letters and numbers of varying sizes from a certain distance. This ends the medical examination which hardly ever takes more than five minutes.
6. "Then comes the psychological examinations which differs from one Komenda Poborowa to another. At some, proper intelligence tests are conducted; at others the questions are more or less political. But on the whole the examination is meant to test the intelligence level of the recruit in order to determine for which service he is most suitable. At places where the intelligence tests have been used they have been the Binet-Termon tests (three or four questions only), the Masselon test to determine imagination (construction of certain figures with blocks), the Piéron test for attentiveness (counting with the eyes a number of irregularly placed dots). Some commissions have had psychotechnical apparatus for the determination of technical abilities (e.g. a Heider apparatus at Poznan). Along with these psychological tests, the recruit is questioned on his education and profession, whether he is interested in sport, etc.
7. "After these examinations the recruits return to the waiting room, get dressed and wait several hours before a N.C.O. comes and hands them the resolution of the commission, which gives the date when they are to present themselves for service and the address of either the Rejonowa Komenda Uzupełnień or the barracks where they have to be at a certain hour on that date. This date is rarely less than a week or more than a month distant. Nothing is said about what service or where the recruit is to serve. Here it must be pointed out that service in the air force, the navy and some other special services is virtually reserved for volunteers. The volunteers (from 17 years of age) have the right to choose where they would serve; 75 per cent of those inducted into the navy and airforce consist of volunteers. The decisive factors for admission into these services are 'ideological level' and social origin. The especially tall, strong boys are sent to the KBW.
8. "On the appointed day the recruits appear at the collecting point. They are checked and then despatched in cattle wagons to their future unit. The system is to summon all those appointed to a certain unit on one date. When the unit is not located far away they are taken there in trucks; if it is at some distance, they go by train. In all cases they travel under guard with four or five armed soldiers from the local Kommandantura per every 20-30 recruits. The recruits never know where they are going. They judge the distance by the amount of food they are told to take with them for the journey.
9. "Immediately on arrival in the barracks of their appointed unit the recruits are subjected to severe discipline. The sergeants shout and abuse them; everything has to be done at top speed; all movement is a run. In the barrack yard they get their first army meal: soup of potatoes or groats with a little meat. They must eat as quickly as possible and then line up for a haircut. After the haircut they go to the depot where they get a uniform and store their civilian clothes.
10. "On the second day the officers conduct short conversations or examination with the recruits. Their questions are very elementary, e.g., how large is the population of Poland, who are her neighbours, etc.?

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11. "The first six weeks of service are considered 'recruit training'. During this time the recruits get no town leave. They are also kept isolated from the other soldiers.

Example 1: Gdansk Engineering Student

12. "Following was the induction experience in Sept 52 of a Gdansk engineering student. He had completed seven years of elementary school and four years at the Liceum Budowy Okretow (Ship Construction College) in Gdansk. He was employed in the ship construction office at Stocznia Gdanska (the Gdansk shipyard). He was summoned to appear before the Rejonowa Komenda Poborowa at Gdansk-Wrzeszcz Sept 52.
13. "The Komenda sat in three barracks in Ulica Rokosowskiego in Sept 1952. These were not its permanent premises; at other times it may meet somewhere else. The recruits summoned were born in the years 1930, 1931, 1932 (always three years at a time). They had got their summons by post. On the day this recruit appeared before the Komenda the summons concerned young men whose names began with 'PR'. There were about 100 or more.
14. "After a sergeant had collected their summons and other documents (see list, paragraph 3) they were packed on trucks - 20 on each - and taken to the sick fund doctor in Gdansk. There they were examined and X-rayed. Each recruit got a note on the state of his lungs.
15. "They were driven back to the Komenda on the same trucks and told to undress completely, even shoes and socks, in the waiting room. They were called before the commission by two's. In the commission room there were two tables: two army doctors sat at one and five officers - captains and majors - at another. The recruits went first to the doctors' table, handed over the note from the sick fund doctor and were examined briefly or practically not at all. Then the doctors wrote a statement on their state of health (practically always good although some recruits complained of one disease or another). With this statement each recruit stepped over to the officers' table. There the recruits underwent a sort of political examination, at least subject recruit did. The officers had in front of them a dossier on every recruit with reports on them from the militia and their place of work or school. All five made copious notes and fired their questions at the recruit with great speed so he would have no time to think out his answers. Subject recruit was asked why he was not a ZMP member (Answer: 'No time, much to learn at college, health poor, etc. '); whether he would join the ZMP in the army (Answer: 'Yes, of course '); whether he had relatives abroad (could not deny that he had four uncles in West Germany); when had they left Poland (his father a CP member; did his mother have a job outside the home, etc.). In the end, because this recruit had some technical training in ship building, they asked whether he would like to go to a naval officers' school where his disability (one of his arms is four cm shorter than the other owing to a clumsy operation) would be no obstacle. He said no; he had no loud voice and his arm hurt him often. Actually he had no wish to go because it would mean three years at the school, three years of service as a cadet on a ship and 15 years service as officer. The commission plainly showed their displeasure at his refusal.
16. "He was sent back to the waiting room and allowed to dress. Three hours later a sergeant came out and handed him a certificate of exemption from military service. The whole procedure had taken from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. All certificates of permanent exemption are yellow oblongs folded in three parts. His belonged to Series E; a friend of his who had a wooden leg got Series D.
17. "The certificates of temporary exemption are green and valid for one year. They are given to persons unavoidably required at some factory of military importance or to those in their last year at college who are very gifted and politically reliable and can produce a certificate to this effect.

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18. "The boys levied for service got no certificate but a travelling order and a notice to appear at a collecting point on a given date.
19. "In former years the boys who hated to do military service resorted to a trick to escape it: they got thoroughly drunk and assaulted a militiaman in this state just before they had to muster up for the journey to their unit. For this they got one month of prison but were also left alone by the military authorities until the next levy, sometimes for a whole year. Now this no longer helps as the levied men are taken from the prisons and sent to their units when their day comes if they are serving a sentence for a petty offence. (To assault a militiaman in a sober state is a political crime, the act of an enemy of the state, and punishable by several years in a labor camp.)
20. Example II: Sailor in the Polish Merchant Marine  
"Following was the induction experience, also in Sept 52, of another recruit, a sailor in the Polish Merchant Marine. He was born 1931 and was a graduate of the Szkoła Morska. [This is included because certain statements vary from those in the preceding paragraphs.]
21. "Twice a year there is a conscription of young men into the Polish Army: from 1 April to 1 May and from 1 Sept to 1 Oct. Between these two periods there are extra draft commissions for special cases. In Gdynia the summons to present oneself for conscription are sent out by the Wojakowa Komenda Rajonowa (formerly Rajonowa Komenda Uzupełni) at Washington Street. There is considerable confusion; sometimes people already serving are summoned; some are summoned several times; others never. Subject himself got four summons: one at FZM (Polska Flotylla Morska), the firm which employed him; one to m/s Nyssa on which he sailed; one to his home and one was handed him on entering the premises of the Komenda.
22. "During the autumn draft of 1952 there was special confusion. At the end of Jul 52 it was proclaimed that the men born in 1932 had to present themselves, also those born in 1929-1931 who had not been called up hitherto. Furthermore, all those persons had to appear whose military service was 'unregulated'. This resulted in the arrival of all sorts of people, men up to 65 years old. In the end the old people were sent home with the answer that their cases would be investigated later.
23. "In autumn 1952 it was already difficult to get exemption from service. The draft posters said that three categories would be exempted: (a) men supporting a family; (b) students; and (c) invalids. A fourth category was not mentioned although it is known that important defense industries can get exemption for their workers in certain cases. In each case the exemption may be renewed for a period of one year only, but if it can be renewed three times, the person is exempted from military service altogether. He gets a note to this effect in his military booklet and is relegated to the reserve. Formerly this procedure applied only to invalids.

- (a) To get an exemption is actually more difficult than would appear from the poster. To come into the first category one must be the only breadwinner in the family; the wife must have her working capacity lowered by at least 40 per cent (an ordinary doctor's certificate is insufficient to prove this: she must go with a special card to a doctor having the confidence of the military authorities); there must be small children and no relative may be in a position to help the family. Subject recruit had a mother-in-law aged 67 to support, a wife with her working capacity lowered by 60 per cent and a small child - so he got exemption.

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- (b) "The students of category II have certain hopes of being exempted if their college provides them with a certificate that exemption is essential in the interests of the state which requires professional men (the project for which they are required must be expressly mentioned). Only certain colleges - polytechnical and technical - may apply for exemption of their students. A certificate from the ZMP on the political attitude of the student determines whether the exemption will be granted. A few years ago success in studies was the determining factor irrespective of the subject the student studied.
- (c) "The eligibility of sick persons - category III - is determined by a doctors' commission. It is presided over by a civilian and includes an officer. The doctors are now young, with the minimum postwar training (3-5 years), rude and disagreeable. Formerly there used to be open discussion of the cause in the presence of the draftee; now the deliberations of the commission are secret, no explanations are admitted; the decision communicated in writing. To anybody having bad eyesight or hearing they say, 'Dobra, dobra! We shall see!', and put down in their papers that the man is fit for service. Practically no ailment short of a missing leg or arm gives exemption; people have been admitted with consumption, cancer, shortsightedness, strong squint, two fingers missing. There is a higher commission which is supposed to check on the lower one but complaints seem useless as the decisions of the lower one are always confirmed.
- (d) "The defence industries which may apply for exemption of their workers from military service are metallurgical plants, such as Stolecen in Szczecin; shipyards, such as Stocznia in Gdansk; the heavy industry and mines in Silesia, etc. The worker must really be a specialist and the application must be filed five days before the expiration of the drafting month (i.e., on 25 Sept in autumn); otherwise they are disregarded.

24. "The conscription committee to which subject recruit had to report, 20 Sept 52, had its premises in Gdynia at 112, Swiatojanska Street. An ordinary flat was converted for the purpose. He entered through an anteroom, a large empty room where there was a table with a few sergeants conducting the preliminary formalities of verifying documents. They sent him on to the right into a large hall, several rooms of the flat knocked into one. In this room there were at least 100 people from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. - some coming, others going. At one end of the hall was a sort of canteen with a few sandwiches and cases of beer. The prices were the usual 3rd class restaurant ones. It was strictly forbidden to drink strong liquor. Ten men at a time were called to appear before the draft commission. In the sergeant's room they were divided into two groups: those who had no hope of exemption went straight to the commission, the others went to the doctors' commission to the left along a passage, where they were examined one by one.

25. "The drafting commission consisted of a chairman - the Czynn timer Spoletczny; another important civilian, the chief of the military department at the presidium of the Miejska Rada Narodowa Sendlak (who seemed quite nice); Major (fnu) Broniewski, chief of the Wosjkowa Komenda Rajonowa in Gdynia; his aide, a lieutenant; a captain from the navy; and the secretary who was a civilian. Broniewski is known in Gdynia as a Communist. The naval captain must have been some kind of politruk for he asked insistently about relatives abroad, their occupations, activity of family during World War II, whether they had owned any property before the war, etc.

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26. "When subject recruit presented himself for the first time and asked to be exempted, he was told to come back after three days. The second time he was asked the same questions as the first time - probably with the intention of catching him in some discrepancy - and then told to wait in the large hall. He sat there from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. when his exemption was granted. During that time the waiting men were given three lectures by lecturers from the Wojewodski Komitet of PZPR on Polish-Soviet friendship."

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